

**Minutes
Congregational Council
St. John's Lutheran Church
July 28th, 2026**

Members: Pastor Pam Fickenscher, Pastor Jonathan Davis, President Paul Beck, President Elect Pam Groves-Gaggioli, Treasurer Judd Lohmann, Secretary Steve Reece; Council Members Cheryl Buck, Beth Cox, Jill Enestvedt, Chris Engstrom, Brian Evenson, Dan Hanson, Andrea Hoff, Susan Lohmann, and Ruthie Neuger.

Present: Pastor Jonathan Davis, President Paul Beck, President Elect Pam Groves-Gaggioli, Secretary Steve Reece; Council Members Beth Cox, Jill Enestvedt, Brian Evenson, Andrea Hoff, Susan Lohmann, Ron Hebensperger (representing Worship & Arts), and Olaf Hall-Holt (representing Adult Ministry & Education).

Absent: Pastor Pam Fickenscher (on sabbatical), Treasurer Judd Lohmann; Council Members Cheryl Buck, Chris Engstrom, Dan Hanson, and Ruthie Neuger.

President Paul Beck called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

1. Devotions based on Walter Brueggemann's *The Prophetic Imagination*

Pastor Jonathan Davis led a discussion of pages 67-79 on the "Language of Amazement" in the Old Testament Prophets.

2. Approval of June Minutes

Andrea Hoff made a motion, seconded by Pam Groves-Gaggioli, for approval of the minutes of the June Council Meeting. Motion carried.

3. Financial Report

See addendum #1 (below) for Treasurer's Report.

4. Action Items

Katie Fick has requested that a portion of her pay for her Bridge Pastor work be designated as housing allowance. Andrea Hoff made a motion, seconded by Beth Cox that, in accordance with IRS regulations, the Council approve a housing allowance of \$xxx for Bridge Pastor Katie Fick. Motion carried.

Olaf Hall-Holt has volunteered to fill the current vacancy as chair of the Adult Education and Ministry Board for the remainder of the year. He is already a member of the Board. Susan Lohmann made a motion, seconded by Brian Evenson, that Olaf Hall-Holt fill the vacancy as chair until the end of the year. Motion carried.

The Foundation Committee has approved a grant proposal submitted by Andrea Hoff to support the Bishop Regina girls' school in Tanzania by funding the tuition for ten students (\$6,000). Jill Enestvedt made a motion, seconded by Brian Evenson, to approve the proposal. Motion carried.

5. Discussion Items

The Executive Committee has had some conversations recently about how the profound success of fund raising by Sustaining Grace and by the Foundation may have the potential to detract from giving to the general fund, which often runs a deficit. Do Council member have ideas about how to remind the congregation that there are many ways to give to St. John's? Council expressed interest in meeting with the Foundation committee to discuss these matters. President Paul Beck will provide a copy of the Foundation bylaws for all Council members to read.

On a (possibly) related note, Stewardship Board wishes to inquire about whether any council members would be willing to give a temple talk during the Fall stewardship campaign. The theme this year is based on the hymn "How Good Lord to be Here." Council members will consider this request individually.

Ron Hebensperger filled the Council in on possible security measures being taken to prevent disruption of the polling place at St. Johns during the November election. He stressed the need to gain clarity about what rights and responsibilities belong to the owners or supervisors of the property where polling is taking place. Ron Hebensperger and Rod Christensen will keep Council apprised of any election security issues and/or efforts to ensure the security of the premises.

6. Pastors' Report

See addendum #2 (below) for Pastors' Report.

7. Board Updates

8. Old Business

At its June meeting Council approved contingently a Foundation grant request for \$5,000 from Julie Brehmer to update the furnishings of the St. John's nursery this summer. The approval was contingent on the approval of the Foundation Committee. The Foundation Committee has since approved this grant request.

9. New Business

10. Future Dates

Board Meetings on August 11th, 7 pm

Council Meeting on August 25th, 7 pm

President Paul Beck adjourned the meeting at 8:15 pm.

Minutes submitted by Secretary Steve Reece

Addendum #1: Treasurer's Financial Report for June, 2026:

Total Operating Income is \$21k below budget for the month of June, and (\$100k) below budget YTD through June.

- Offering:
 - o June offering was \$11k below budget.
 - o June YTD offering is (\$55k) below budget.
 - o 2026 June YTD offering is about \$30k above 2025 YTD offering through June.
- Other Income
 - o June YTD combined "Other Income" and "Other Gifts" is \$4k above budget.
 - o June YTD Designated and Foundation Funds are (\$49k) below budget.

Total Operating Expense is \$5k above budget for June, and (\$68k) below budget YTD through June.

- Personnel is (\$6k) below budget for June and (\$35k) below budget YTD. Because of the timing of how salaries are paid, there will be one month where salaries are doubled up and this should be on target by year end.
- Property and Grounds is \$13k above budget for the month of June. This is primarily due to the "catch up" billing for the long term billing issues we have had with Xcel since the Solar Panels were installed. St. John's and Xcel had agreed for St. John's to not pay monthly bills until Xcel straightened out their billing process. This has been going since mid 2025. Even though Xcel bills were not paid for the last five months of 2025, The 2026 YTD budget for Utilities is only \$5k over budget.
 - o YTD Property and Grounds is (\$5k) below Budget
 - o YTD Benevolence is (\$4k) below budget and Youth is about (\$8k) below budget
 - o No Boards are above budget YTD

Net Income/(loss)

- Net Income for June is \$26k below budget, and (\$32k) below budget YTD.

Addendum #2: Pastors' Report for July, 2026:

Official acts:

Burial of Katie Creighton, July 9 (deceased in 2024)

Funeral for Darlene Schloeder, July 16

Staff:

Nick Gilbert began his work with us in youth ministry on July 20 and will overlap with Kristin until her departure at the end of the month.

Katie Fick will start her work as Bridge Pastor on Sunday July 26.

Regarding the benefits discussion last month, xxx will be covered for health insurance through the end of September. We will be in touch with the church office about adding him to Portico beginning October 1.

CYE:

St. John's will be partnering with Bethel for VBS in August. They are bringing a group from Good Earth Village to help lead a week-long VBS. St. John's will be hosting a VBS for younger kids that same week.

St. John's, Bethel, First UCC, and St. Peter's have been in conversation about partnering together for summer trips next year – which will likely include the ELCA Youth Gathering in Minneapolis. There is a lot of transition in youth ministry in town and we see this as a great opportunity to build in some new rhythms and collaborations.

Sabbaticals

When you read this, Pastor Pam will likely already be en route or arrived in Guatemala, the first stop on sabbatical. Thank you again for the opportunity to step away from the daily rhythms of parish life to learn, renew and reconnect with family and friends. I am truly grateful.

Around the church:

It has been a rich summer for conferences! St. Olaf hosted Lutheran Summer Music, and we were blessed on a Sunday with some of their fellows playing in worship. The Association of Lutheran Church Musicians met mid-month, with Nathan and David in attendance. Arielle, Julie and Pam all shared in some of the Conference on Worship, Theology and the Arts this week; the event was the capstone of our year participating in the Wonders of Worship pilot. In addition, we had a cohort from our WELCA chapter attending the Triennial WELCA convention in Des Moines this past weekend.